

OUR READERS WRITE

One of our favorite times of day at the NACDS newsroom is when the afternoon mail arrives. The entire staff gathers in the conference room to review our readers' comments. We thought we'd share some of this month's with you.

Alan, from Arab, writes: *I think my NACDS membership has expired, but I'm not sure. How can I find out, and how do I renew it if it has?*

Editor: We're glad you asked, Alan! To renew your membership, complete an updated membership form and send it, along with a check made out to NACDS, to the address on the form.

You can pick a membership form up at our dances, or you can download the form from <http://secontra.com/membership.pdf>.

Renew your membership annually. The address label on your monthly newsletter lists your renewal date, so if you've forgotten when it's time to renew, check there.

Disenfranchised, from Decatur, writes: *What's happened to the quality of the newsletter? Shouldn't there be letters from readers and contributions from someone besides that new guy? His articles are boring and irrelevant – they look like gibberish he wrote in the middle of the night before his deadline!*

Editor: Frankly we're stunned by your callousness, Dis. And yet there's a ring of truth to what you say. Our office manager reports that some of our writers do lack the seasoned fluency in contra dance culture so common among our readers. And yes, there is one writer in particular who tends to wing it at the last minute before deadlines.

So we hired graduate students from several local universities to analyze the situation and propose solutions, and then we sent a focus group off to the Poconos for several weeks to weigh their recommendations and determine a strategy for going forward.

We think you'll be thrilled with their conclusions. We've slashed the salary of the procrastinating writer and put him on probation, and we're introducing this new feature, **Our Readers Write**, to spotlight the questions, comments, and opinions of you, our readers!

Here are three simple ways to give us your input:

Email:	k-riggs@mchsi.com
Telephone:	256-859-9281
Post:	Kevin Riggs Editor, NACDS Newsletter 291 River Cove Rd. Huntsville, AL 35811



HUNTSVILLE CALENDAR

• Huntsville dances are the 1st & 3rd Saturdays of each month in the gym at Faith Presbyterian Church, 5003 Whitesburg Dr., South, (corner of Whitesburg Dr. & Airport Rd.). Beginners Workshop is at 7:00 PM then the regular dance is from 7:30 – 10:30 PM.

• Admission is \$7 (\$6 for members), \$4 for teens, free for ages 12 & under.

Remember to bring comfortable, **non-scuffing shoes** for dancing. Bring someone new to a dance this month.

• Contact Bryan Walls (256) 837-0656 or email: bwalls@pobox.com or visit <http://secontra.com.NACDS.html> for more info.

AUGUST 4 : HUNTSVILLE

CALLER CHRISSY DAVIS-CAMP

BAND ED BAGGOTT & ELSIE PETERSON

AUGUST 18 : HUNTSVILLE

CALLER HARRY DELUGACH

BAND WOLVES A HOWLIN'

AREA DANCE GYPSY CALENDAR

AUGUST 3 : NASHVILLE

CALLER CHRISSY DAVIS-CAMP

BAND JIM WOOD & FRIENDS

AUGUST 10 : NASHVILLE

CALLER MELISSA & ED WILKINSON

BAND PLAIDGRASS

AUGUST 11 : BIRMINGHAM

CALLER VICKI HERNDON

BAND HERB TROTMAN BAND

AUGUST 17 : NASHVILLE

CALLER EMMA RUSHTON

BAND THE CONTRARIAN ENSEMBLE

AUGUST 17-19 : MENTONE

OLD TIME MUSIC AND DANCE WEEKEND

FEATURING THE QUEEN CITY BULLDOGS

AUGUST 17 : NASHVILLE

CALLER SUSAN KEVRA

BAND SMALL TIME STRING BAND WITH GRETCHEN PRIEST

AUGUST 25 : CHATTANOOGA

CALLER NICK BOULET

BAND MAPLE HILL BAND

OCTOBER 26-28 : NASHVILLE

NASHVILLE COUNTRY DANCERS MUSIC CITY MASQUERADE

CONTRA DANCE WEEKEND AT COHN ADULT LEARNING CENTER

CALLER NILS FREDLAND

BAND RODNEY MILLER AND AIRDANCE

FoOTMaD (Birmingham) dances 2nd Saturdays at the YMCA, 3rd Ave & 23rd St, 7:30 PM.

<http://www.bamalong.com/bcds.htm>.

CTDS (Chattanooga) dances 2nd & 4th Saturdays at All Saints Academy, 310 E. 8th St., downtown, 8:00 PM.

Contact Steve at (706) 937-4991, Claire & Bryant at (423)876-7359 or <http://contranooga.org>

Misty Mountain Dancers (Sewanee, TN) dances at the Legion Hall in Sewanee, TN. For details, call (931) 598-0814 or check <http://mistycontra.zoomshare.com/>

NCD (Nashville) dances almost every Friday at 8:00 PM at NEW LOCATION – Second Presbyterian Church on Belmont Blvd one block south of Woodmont – on the corner of Graybar. Sept 8 at Cohn Adult Education Center, 4805 Park Ave.

Contact Chrissy at (615) 210-6808 or John, email:

DanceFools@aol.com or <http://dancenashville.org/>

Flat Creek dances – 2 & 4th Tues, Flat Creek Community Center – seven miles south of Shelbyville, TN.

http://www.nashvilleoldtime.org/Dances/flatcreekcontra_dances.htm

A BIT FARTHER AWAY, BUT WELL WORTH THE TRAVEL

CCD (Atlanta) dances on Fridays & alternate Tuesdays.

<http://contradance.org>

KCD (Knoxville) dances every Monday.

<http://www.kornet.org/kcd/>

MCD (Memphis) dances on the 1st & 3rd Fridays.

<http://hometown.aol.com/horselovers/index.html>

Sautee Community Dances (N. GA) once a month from Sept – May. <http://sauteecontra.home.mindspring.com/>

EYE CONTACT AND GIVING WEIGHT

The following is an edited excerpt from *ContraCulture: An Introduction to Contra Dancing*, by Steven Nagy, at: <http://www.hwcn.org/link/jig/contraculture.htm>

Giving weight is a technique to make your dancing, and your partners', a lot easier and more enjoyable. The idea is to provide a bit of resistance to your partners, each pulling against the other in a balanced fashion. Not only does this reinforce the sense of connectedness between you, it allows your bodies to act as a single unit so that you can move together much more efficiently.

Imagine running around a pole. It would take more energy to run around it without touching it than it would if you held on to it as you ran. The same principle applies when dancing. Anytime you revolve with others (in a swing, an allemande, a star, and so forth), lean away a little bit, and let them lean away from you in the same way, holding one another in a balance that has weight. This is what we mean by giving weight. When you don't give weight, it bogs your partners down, like trying to dance with a wet noodle!

On the other hand, you have to be considerate of your partner and controlled when giving weight, especially if you are heavier or stronger than them. The last thing you want is to throw them off balance or make them struggle to keep their equilibrium. In particular, most of your weight should be centered over your own feet—if you lean back too far and give too much weight, you will feel immensely heavy to your partner. Your objective is to give just enough weight to stabilize your movement as a couple.

One of the conventions that makes contra dance so exciting is *eye contact*. People look into the eyes of whomever they dance with. Many people find this discomforting at first. However, once newcomers experience this honest acknowledgement and connection with partners that reinforces the physical connection of joined hands, they usually begin to enjoy it and accept the convention.

Besides being fun, some say that maintaining eye contact reduces the dizziness that some people experience when swinging and spinning. Dizziness is a common complaint among beginning contra dancers. Within the contra dance community, advice and remedies for dizziness abound. I have heard a number of people say that they eventually just got over it—after dancing for a few months, they simply stopped getting dizzy.

Here's another observation on giving weight, by Camilla Streeter, after spending an evening dancing the gentleman's part:

The real fun of contra dancing is when it is smooth and effortless, and a nice push and pull with your partner keeps our arms from getting tired. If I stand with my arm out to the side and hold it up it will get tired, but if I press against a wall I can do that all day.

Press with your left hand on my right shoulder blade a bit, and then I get to hold you up with my back. I press my right hand on your shoulder blade, and we create a nice wall to lean back on. Press your right hand into my left *just* the right amount and feel how our little box just stands up by itself. If you have spaghetti arms, then I have to do all the work with one arm.



GET CONNECTED, STAY CONNECTED

Visit the NACDS web site:

<http://secontra.com/NACDS.html>

There is an announcement list for everyone, and a Yahoo Group discussion list for those more involved. E-mail nacds@pobox.com if you'd like to be on either.

Yahoo group:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NACDScontraCommunity/>



**North Alabama Country Dance Society
162 White Elephant Road Grant AL 35747**

Address Correction Requested

**Please Join Us!
Or Renew Your Membership!**

*Send just \$10 for one, or
\$15 per family, to the address above.*

*Make checks payable to NACDS.
(mailing label shows renewal date)*

*Members receive monthly newsletter,
2 guest passes, and a \$1 DISCOUNT to
each regular dance!*